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THE

LOUNGER.

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THE LOUNGER.

Nº 70. SATURDAY, *June* 3, 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

AFTER a residence of many years in the southern part of this island, business concurring with the natural desire one has of revisiting one's native country, induced me to make a journey to Scotland in the beginning of last autumn. As I travelled on horseback, with a single servant attending me, I was tempted frequently to strike out of the common road, for the purpose of enjoying some of those romantic scenes with which the northern counties of England abound. One evening about sunset, after traversing a part of the country, of great beauty, but of a wild and uncultivated aspect, I entered suddenly a narrow valley, where every

thing wore the appearance of high cultivation; and in the judicious blending of ornament with utility, it was eaſy to perceive that induſtry had been guided by the hand of taſte.

While I rode at leiſure down a ſteep and winding path, indulging that pleaſing ſpecies of reverie to which a ſcene of this kind naturally gives riſe, a ſmall column of ſmoke aſcending from a thick tuft of trees at the bottom, gave notice of a habitation; and on turning the corner of a hedged incloſure, a low manſion broke ſuddenly upon my view, having in front about an acre of open ground, of which the greateſt part was laid out as a kitchen-garden and ſhrubbery. A level graſs-plot ſurrounded the houſe, which was ſeparated from the garden by a white rail. The houſe itſelf was of one ſtory, extending, in a lengthened front, with two ſmall wings, at either end of which a fruit-tree was trained around the window. A green garden-chair was placed on each ſide of the door.

While ſurveying with much pleaſure this little elegant retreat, I paſſed upon the road a ruddy-coloured, middle-aged man, in a plain country-dreſs, whoſe face, it immediately occurred to me, I had ſomewhere before ſeen. Uncertain, however, whether there might be any thing more than one of thoſe accidental reſemblances which we every day meet with (though I per-

ceived that he at the ſame time viewed me with ſome attention), I paſſed on. Meeting afterwards with ſome labourers returning from work, I inquired the name of the proprietor of the little villa I had been contemplating, and was informed it was a *Mr. Saintfort.* The name ſtruck me. I recollected to have known at college a Will. Saintfort, a young man of ſome fortune, of a lively turn, and quick parts, but in the greateſt degree thoughtleſs and extravagant. I remembered to have ſince heard that he had married a faſhionable wife, whoſe diſpoſition was much akin to his own; and that he had in a very few years ſpent his whole fortune. "Can this," ſaid I to myſelf, "be my "old companion? Sure I thought I knew his "face, and he too recollected mine. It muſt "be ſo: yet how this metamorphoſis?" Occupied with theſe thoughts, I had ſlackened my pace, and was ſurpriſed to find myſelf once more joined by the gentleman I had before paſſed. "If I miſtake not," ſaid he, "your name "is D——." "Yes, and yours Saintfort."— "The ſame. How unexpected this meeting!" ——After much mutual gratulation, "Come," ſaid he, "you go no farther this night; nor, "with my will, for ſome days. You muſt take "a bed with your old friend, and ſee how "Farmer Saintfort lives."

Entreaty was needleſs; for I was delighted with the rencounter; and I followed my friend, who led the way, to the ſtables, and aſſiſted himſelf in putting up my horſes. He then conducted me into the houſe, which within correſponded entirely with its external appearance. In a little hall through which we entered were ſome angling rods and fowling pieces, with a weed-hook and garden-rake. In the parlour ſtood a piano-forte, on which lay a violin and ſome muſic; and in a corner of the room, which was ſhelved for the purpoſe, were ranged a few books of huſbandry and ornamental gardening, ſome volumes of Engliſh poetry, Hutcheſon's Moral Philoſophy, Horace, and a few of the Latin claſſics.

An old ſervant now made his appearance, and received orders to acquaint his miſtreſs to prepare the ſtranger's bed-room, and to get ready an early ſupper. In the interval we ſauntered out into the fields, and paſſed the time in ordinary chit-chat about our old companions, till we were ſummoned to ſupper by a comely boy of twelve years of age, who, with a girl three years younger, were my friend's only children. Mr. Saintfort introduced me to his wife by the title of an old and valued acquaintance; and I found in that lady the moſt perfect politeneſs and affability, joined to that eaſy gracefulneſs

of

of manner which diſtinguiſhes thoſe who have moved in a ſuperior walk of life. Our ſupper was plain, but delicious; an excellent pullet, milk in a variety of forms, and freſh vegetables; our converſation intereſting, animated, and good-humoured. In my life, I never ſpent a more delightful evening. After Mrs. Saintfort had retired (like Eve, "on hoſpitable thoughts "intent,") "There," ſaid Saintfort, "there, "Mr. D——, is one of the firſt, the beſt of wo-"men. You knew me formerly; and I have "marked the natural ſurpriſe you ſhewed at "finding me in this ſituation. You ſhall have "my ſtory; for to an old friend and compa-"nion, ſimple as it is, it cannot fail to be inte-"reſting."

"My father's death, which happened a few years after I entered to the univerſity, made me, as you may remember, the envy of many of our common acquaintance, as it was generally ſuppoſed I had ſucceeded to a fortune of L. 2000 *per annum.* I had before this contracted many habits of extravagance; and the diſſipation into which I now plunged, joined to an indolence of temper not uncommon at that period of life, prevented me for a conſiderable time from diſcovering that the free rents of my eſtate did not exceed one half of the income I was ſuppoſed to poſſeſs. Even after that diſcovery, the reliſh

I had acquired for every ſpecies of faſhionable diſſipation, and the abſurd vanity of ſupporting the appearance of a man of fortune, led me to continue my expences, after I had become convinced that they were leading me to my ruin.

"My vanity was not a little flattered by the attentions ſhewn me by the ladies, who, it was eaſy to be perceived, regarded me as a young fellow, of whom there was ſome honour in making a conqueſt. *Lucinda N——* was at that time the ornament of the politeſt circles in town. What her figure was in thoſe days, you may gueſs from what you ſee it is at preſent. With every attraction of face and perſon, endowed with every faſhionable accompliſhment, and poſſeſſing a very handſome independent fortune, ſhe had numberleſs admirers. It was no mean triumph, when I perceived that this little deſpot, who exerciſed upon others all the capricious ſovereignty of a coquette, maintained with me ſo oppoſite a manner as to convince me of her decided affection. I availed myſelf of the diſcovery, which gratified equally my pride and my paſſion; for I really loved her; and in my marriage with Lucinda, whoſe temper and taſte were apparently much reſembling my own, I flattered myſelf with the continued enjoyment of thoſe faſhionable pleaſures, which I had now extended the means of procuring.

"When

" When I look back to the firſt four years of my married ſtate, it is like the confuſed remembrance of ſome tumultuous dream. In that perpetual diſſipation in which we were now involved, and to which the gay and lively temper of my wife rather prompted than impoſed any reſtraint, I did not perceive that her fortune, conſiderable as it was, was totally inſufficient to repair the waſte I had already made in my own. At length I was awakened from my lethargy by a refuſal of my banker to make further advances without additional ſecurities; and when I applied for that purpoſe to a friend, he frankly told me that I was generally conſidered as a ruined man.

" In place of being overpowered by this intelligence, it brought me to my ſenſes;—like thoſe violent applications, which, by pain itſelf, put a ſtop to the delirium of a fever. I ſaw the folly of concealment, and the inhumanity of allowing my wife to learn our ſituation from any tongue but my own. But to make this terrible avowal, occaſioned a conflict of mind, ſuch as it is impoſſible for me to deſcribe. I paſſed two ſleepleſs nights, without finding courage to unboſom myſelf; and Lucinda's anxious inquiries at length led to the diſcovery. The ſhock was ſevere, and for a moment ſhe gave way to the natural feelings of a woman. It was but for a

 moment;

moment; — when, as if animated by a new ſoul, and inſpired with a fortitude of mind which aſtoniſhed me, "Come, my dear Will," ſaid ſhe, claſping me to her boſom, "we have "both been fools; it is fit that we ſhould pay "the price of our folly: But let us thence "learn to be wiſe. Thank God, we are bleſt "with health, and with each other's affection; "and there is yet much of life before us."— "But what," ſaid I, "is to be done?"— "To be done," ſaid ſhe; — "Juſtice, in the "firſt place. Let us learn with accuracy the "full extent of our debts, and the means we "have to diſcharge them."

"It was a ſtruggle yet more ſevere, to declare my ſituation to the world; and ſuffering under a feeling of falſe ſhame, I would have meanly waſted the time in uſeleſs procraſtination: but the noble ſpirit of my Lucinda combated this unmanly weakneſs. It was no ſurpriſe to the world to learn with certainty what had long been expected. In a little time the amount of our debts and effects was aſcertained with preciſion; and, ſetting apart a ſmall proportion of my wife's fortune, which was ſecured to her by law, the reſt, together with mine, fell ſhort of the payment of our debts by L. 2000 Sterling. Having, however, made a fair ſurrender of all that was my own, I compounded

pounded with my creditors, and received their discharge.

"It remained to determine what was to be our plan of life for the future. An old domestic of my father's had been for several years settled in the north of England, where he rented this farm from the Earl of ——. Hither we proposed to retire for a few months, till we should arrange our future schemes. I was struck with the wild and romantic scenery of this beautiful dale; and, harassed as I had been with care and anxiety, my spirits were soothed for some time by the quiet and solitude of the country. I own to you, my friend, that this composure of mind was not permanent. The man of the world cannot at once assume the manners and taste of a recluse. The change was too violent, from the tumult of my former life, to the dead calm in which I now passed my time. After some weeks acquaintance had worn off the edge of novelty, I no longer saw the same beauties in the fields, the woods, the rocks, that had at first engaged me. The manners of the country people offended by their vulgarity; and in the society of a few of the neighbouring gentry I found nothing to amuse a cultivated mind, or engage a lively imagination. I looked back with regret to the splendor and bustle

of my former life; and, impossible as it was for me to indulge in the same gratifications, I would gladly have returned to town; and would, perhaps, have performed the same humiliating part I have seen exhibited by the decayed minions of fashion, spendthrifts like myself, who haunt, like ghosts, the places of public resort, content to be the spectators of those scenes where they have formely figured as the most brilliant actors. My Lucinda saw with anxiety this increasing disgust, and her good sense directed to its proper remedy. "We grow tired," said she, "of this life of inactivity. We languish for "want of an object to occupy us. I have "been meditating a small experiment; and if "you approve, we shall put it in execution. "What if we should for a while become farm-"ers ourselves? You are surprised at the pro-"posal, but let me explain my meaning. Sup-"pose our good landlord should transfer to us "the remainder of his lease; that he should "have the charge of management, with a suit-"able recompence, while the chance of profit, "and the risk of loss, should be ours. I know "he will agree to it, for I have sounded him "on the subject. The laborious part, the bu-"siness of agriculture, shall be his, while we "occupy ourselves in decorating this little spot

"with

"with a thousand embellishments, which na-"ture points out, and which your good taste "could easily execute. Remember, it is only "an experiment. Our bargain must be con-"ditional. If we tire of it, we can when we "please drop the scheme, and pursue any "other we chuse to adopt." To be short, Sir, I was pleased with the idea; our plan was soon arranged, and I became what you now see me, Farmer Saintfort.

"I set to work with alacrity in the business of improvement; and proceeding on the principle of uniting beauty with utility, I had, in the space of a few months, accomplished the outlines of that plan which I have been continually occupied since that time in finishing in detail. In this employment, in which the mind has much more share than is generally imagined, I found a source of pleasure infinitely beyond my expectation. Every day added to the beauties of my little paradise; and I had the satisfaction of finding that those operations which the motive of ornament had first suggested, were frequently of the most substantial benefit. The beautiful variety of the ground was obscured by an undistinguished mass of brush-wood. I enlarged the extent of my arable ground, by opening fields to the sun, which had lain hid under a matting of furze

and brambles. In the formation of a fiſh-pond, I have drained an unwholſome fen, and converted a quagmire into a luxuriant meadow. At the end of the firſt year, my tutor in huſbandry gave me hopes that the ſucceeding crop would double the returns which the farm had ever afforded under his management; and the event juſtified his prediction. How delightful, my dear friend, was it for me to perceive that the taſte of my Lucinda ſeemed equally adapted with my own to our new mode of life! Far from inheriting that inſtability of mind with which her ſex is generally reproached, her ardour was unabated, and every thought was centered in the cares of her houſehold, and the education of her children. Completely engaged in theſe domeſtic duties, while I ſuperintended the labours of the fields and garden, we had no other anxiety than what tended to give a zeſt to our enjoyments. In place of feeling time lie heavy on our hands, we roſe with the ſun, and found the day too ſhort for its occupations.

" We had now learned, by experience, how very moderate an income is ſufficient to purchaſe all the real comforts of life. At the concluſion of the third year, on ſumming up our accounts, we found a clear ſaving of L. 400. This ſum we might, perhaps, without any breach

breach of what the world terms honeſty, have conſidered as our own. But (thank God!), ſlaves as we had been to the world, we had better notions of moral rectitude. It was unfit that we ſhould accumulate for ourſelves, while there exiſted a ſingle perſon that could ſay, we had done him wrong. We ſet apart this ſum as the beginning of a fund for the payment of, that equitable claim which yet remained to our creditors; and it is now ſome years ſince we could boaſt of having faithfully diſcharged the laſt farthing of our debts. The pleaſure attendant on this reflection, you may conceive, but I cannot deſcribe. How poor, in compariſon to it, are the ſelfiſh gratifications of vanity, the mean indulgence of pampered appetites, and all the train of luxurious enjoyments, when bought at the expence of conſcience!

"Since my reſidence here, I have more than once made a viſit to town on an errand of buſineſs. I there ſee the ſame ſcenes as formerly; and others intoxicated, like myſelf, with the ſame giddy pleaſures. To me the magical deluſion is at an end; and I wonder where lay the charm which once had ſuch power of faſcination. But one ſpecies of pleaſure I have enjoyed from theſe viſits, which I cannot omit to mention; the affectionate welcome I have received

ceived from the most respectable of my old acquaintance. I read from their countenances their approbation of my conduct; and in their kindness mingled with respect, I have a reward valuable in proportion to the worth of those who bestow it. Nor is the pleasure less which I derive from the regard and esteem of my honest neighbours in the country. Of their characters I had formed a very unfair estimate, when seen through the medium of my own distempered mind; and in their society my Lucinda and I enjoy, if not the refined pleasures of polished intercourse, the more valuable qualities of sincerity, probity, and good sense.

"Such, Sir, for these fourteen years past, has been my manner of life; nor do I believe I shall ever exchange it for another. The term of my lease has, within that period, been renewed in my own name, and that of my son. If a more active life should be *his* choice, he is free to pursue it. I shall be content with the reflection of having bestowed on him a better patrimony than I myself enjoyed,—a mind uncorrupted by the prospect of hereditary affluence, and a constitution tempered to the virtuous habits of industry and sobriety."

Here Mr. Saintfort made an end of his story. I have given it as nearly as I could in his own words;

words; and judging it to afford an example not unworthy to be recorded, I tranfmit it in that view to the author of a work which bids fair to pafs down to pofterity.—I am, Sir, yours,

J. D.